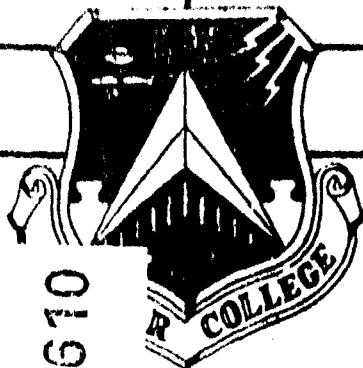


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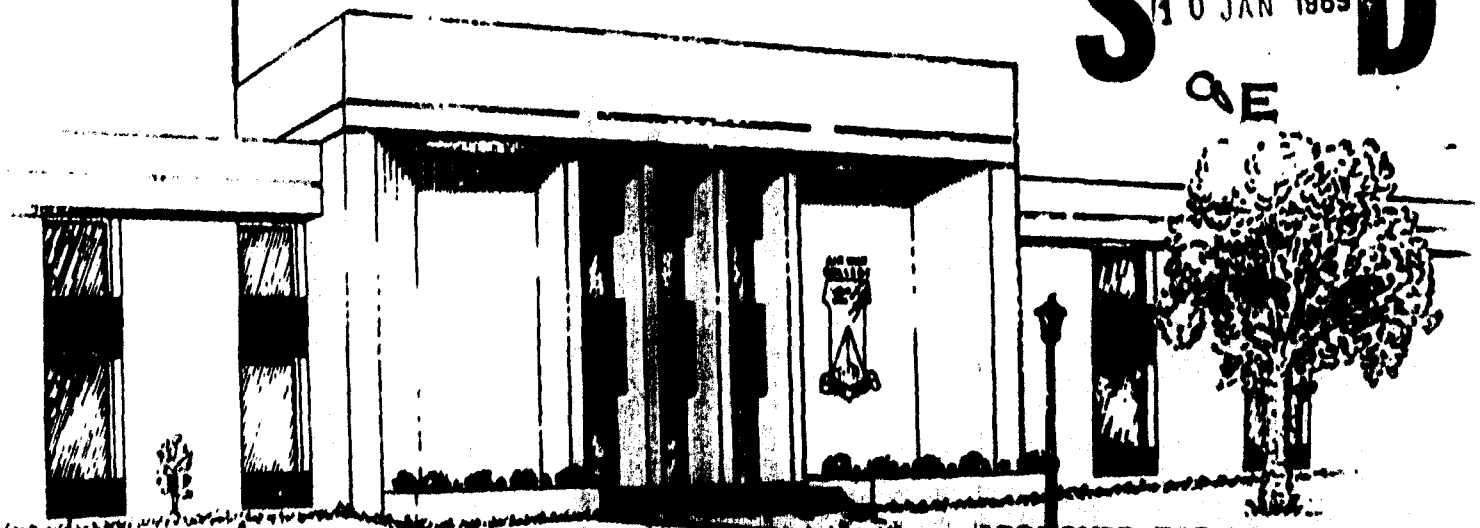
RESEARCH REPORT

AN OPTION OFFENSE IN THE DEFENSE OF EUROPE

COLONEL MICHAEL E. BOLIN

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AIR UNIVERSITY
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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AN OPTION OF OFFENSE IN THE DEFENSE OF EUROPE

by

Michael E. Bolin
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A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN
FULFILLMENT OF THE RESEARCH
REQUIREMENT

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AIR WAR COLLEGE RESEARCH REPORT ABSTRACT

TITLE: An Option of Offense in the Defense of Europe

AUTHOR: Michael E. Bolin, Colonel, U.S. Army

← Regardless of the numerous accounts that the Nato Alliance is purely a defensive coalition, this paper advocates that an element of offensive thrust is engrained in the fibers of the adopted "flexible response" strategy. It is more prominent at the operational and tactical levels of conventional warfare. The generation of the FOFA concept as well as the U.S. Army's Airland Battle doctrine are typical examples of potential offensive efforts across the Central European front. Supporting points of application in military strategy and doctrine are presented for the reader's review.

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Keywords: FOFA (Follow On Forces Attack); Military doctrine; Theater level doctrine; Cooperation; NATO mission objectives. (ed.)

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

A graduate of Montana State University (B.S., M.S. Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering 1971.), Colonel Michael E. Bolin has served in the U.S. Army and the National Guard since 1967. He has accumulated over 4,000 flying hours as a pilot and flight instructor in Viet Nam and the National Guard as well as serving as an armor officer in the 163d Armored Cavalry Regiment. A graduate of the U.S. Army's Resident Command and General Staff College with distinction, he presently serves on the Adjutant General's staff as the Facilities Officer. Colonel Bolin is a graduate of the Air War College, class of 1988.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

War, therefore , is an act of policy.
Carl von Clausewitz

The North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 established the framework that organized a set of nations into a defensive alliance that, for the last 39 years, has been instrumental in deterring conventional and nuclear war in Europe. The eventual adoption of the Flexible Response Strategy by the NATO Alliance in 1967 was in response to an unwelcomed imbalance in superpower nuclear capabilities that eroded the credibility of the "massive retaliation" theory of post World War II years. Today, terms such as "deliberate escalation", "flexible response" and "forward defense" are common phrases used in the analysis and assessment efforts by recognized strategists, academicians and statesmen to ensure the establishment of a workable NATO defensive strategy. Indeed, history supports their declaration that the seemingly fragile entwinement of strategic nuclear threat and conventional force response provides the backbone for deterrence of conflict on the European Continent. They, also, are quick to point out that the rapidly advancing equipment modernization programs and force structure enhancements on both sides of the political border may signal the end to NATO's hope for maintaining the status quo in warfighting capabilities for the rest of this

century.

But, it is not the intent of this thesis to dismantle the deterrence cloak of NATO's defense strategy; there are far more knowledgeable defense experts who have built and refined the present concept, and an equal number who are as determined to radically alter NATO's military direction, as well as her political and economic bearing. Rather, I argue that an offensive fiber is already imbedded in the Alliance's defensive strategy and that the ultimate conventional defense of Europe rests upon the timely strategic and operational use of offensive maneuver, such as the heralded U.S. Army Airland Battle Doctrine and NATO's Follow-on Forces Attack Concept, to achieve more concretely defined military and political objectives of the war. To this end, I intend to: 1) briefly discuss NATO's present military strategy including the United States' interests, 2) expose evidence of offensive implications within that doctrine, and finally 3) assess the validity for offensive maneuver in the Alliance's application of their strategy that will provide the stepping stone to highlight probable approaches to strategic and operational battlefield maneuver required for a successful campaign in Central Europe.

CHAPTER II

DEFENDING WESTERN EUROPE

Once the defender has gained an important advantage, defense as such has done its work. While he is enjoying this advantage, he must strike back, or he will court destruction.

Carl von Clausewitz

NATO Strategy

The starting point to visualizing the nature of the next major war in Europe begins with understanding the political and military stance of the Western European States. As a sixteen nation effort, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, by political decree, projects a common defensive character designed to safeguard the Alliance's political and economic activities. The coalition is an organized effort to deter, or repel if necessary, communist aggression, insurgency or expansion efforts in Western Europe and the North Atlantic. The adoption of the "Flexible Response" strategy as a replacement in the 1960's for the weakened "Massive Retaliation" strategy, linked the more traditional forms of warfare with strategic nuclear capabilities that seeks to deter all forms of aggression, from low intensity subversion to strategic nuclear warfare.¹ This 1967 deterrence initiative sought to expand the alternatives available to NATO authorities to "respond-in-kind" to any and all acts of aggression in the spectrum of military warfare.

The least probable response, but the most radical, of course, is nuclear war, the stalwart foundation of the deterrence leg that causes "the aggressor to believe that the cost of waging

war will far exceed the benefits that are gained" (33:3). But, to lend credibility to deterrence, NATO must convince the Warsaw Pact that NATO is prepared to use a full range of military might to counter any aggression. The credibility is ultimately mirrored in NATO's willingness to use proven nuclear weaponry if conventional capabilities are insufficient.

The fundamental nature of NATO's strategy lies in its conscientious effort to confront hostilities before the nuclear threshold is reached. The eruption of a nuclear-free conflict will signal an end to deterrence and compel the Alliance to defeat the attack, thereby placing "the burden of escalation on the aggressor" (33:3). Thus, "deliberate escalation" to a theater nuclear level becomes a function of the degree of success of NATO's "direct defense" concept and the sufficiency of the conventional forces. The ultimate step of course, is a General Nuclear Response.

To date, the success of the Alliance's strategy has solidified NATO's intention to remain in its collective stance. As General Bernard W. Rogers, former Commander-in-Chief, United States Forces, Europe, reaffirmed last year before the United States Senate Armed Services Committee, ² "Both (NATO and U.S.) recognize that deterrence and defense must be accomplished collectively, as an alliance, to be successful. The primary goal of NATO strategy is to deter the threat of any kind, not just nuclear war" (33:3).

Regardless of continued attempts at reform by the entire array of NATO critics, the strategy, as it stands, will be the guidance for future warfighting efforts on European soil.

Strategic Objectives

The success of the Flexible Response Strategy is measured in the attainment of the Alliance's political goals. Deterrence in itself is an objective of Flexible Response, and as long as the North Atlantic region is void of war, NATO is realizing its most important perpetual objective. But should deterrence fail, the success of the Alliance rests on the accomplishment of three goals:

1. Defeat the Soviet Union's attempt to dominate all of Europe by destroying its advancement as far forward as possible,
2. Restore the security and integrity of NATO,
3. Impose punitive action that ensures that the Soviet's cost of waging war is "out of all proportion to any advantage he hopes to gain." (27:27)

Successfully defending and restoring Western Europe's integrity are fundamental to NATO's security interests, but applying "punitive action" has never been a well defined nor accepted task. The assumed response, of course, to any form of aggression has always been a nuclear retaliation. However, conventional force modernization and advancing technology, coupled with potential Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) reduction agreements, have begun to highlight the possibility that the next European conflict may be fought in an environment free of nuclear use. But regardless of the conditions of the hostile atmosphere, the aspirations of the coalition in wartime - to defeat, to restore, to punish - remain unchanged and induce the argument that, in a

strictly conventional war, an aggressive and offensively-minded military force is required to enact punitive action. The degree of corporate punishment and political risk assessed on the aggressor has not been openly debated, but U.S. national interests, considered compatible with NATO goals, project a defense policy that targets what the United States believes the Soviets should risk the most in a European war:

1. Soviet warmaking capabilities including the entire range of military forces and,
2. the mechanisms for ensuring survival of the Communist Party and its leadership cadres, and for retention of the party's control over the Soviet and the Soviet bloc peoples. (30:21)

Consequently, targeting Soviet political and military camps in non Soviet Warsaw Pact countries as the risk for Soviet aggression infers that NATO's military objectives lie across the Inner German Border in Eastern Europe. Under this circumstance, the risk for undertaking conventional hostilities in Europe is commensurate with what they hope to gain; i.e. they will either control all of Europe or none of it. This requires aggressive military action and uncovers an offensive necessity in NATO's strategy that has remained dormant and camouflaged until now.

This does not suggest that conventional weapons should replace nuclear might as the deterrent force; there should never be a unilateral nuclear standdown that is unfavorable to NATO's interests. Extreme care has always been undertaken by the Alliance to develop and maintain a substantial strategic and

theater nuclear force with "first-use" deliberation to support this strategy if the third leg of the triad, the conventional force, fails to deter or stop Warsaw Pact aggression.

While the Alliance's deterrence strategy seems passively defensive, the most anticipated form of war of the entire spectrum to first test and ultimately breach the deterrence wall will be a Warsaw Pact nonnuclear attack. Moreover, since the posture of NATO's conventional in-place forces is suspect, pessimistic European military leaders believe that, "if attacked conventionally today, NATO would face fairly quickly the decision to escalate to a nuclear response in order to try to cause the aggressor to halt its advance" (33:5).

CHAPTER III

OFFENSIVE STRATEGY

Even when the only point of the war is to maintain the status quo, the fact remains that merely parrying a blow goes against the essential nature of war, which certainly does not consist merely in enduring.

Carl von Clausewitz

The disturbing implication that the nuclear threshold will be reached early in the conflict suggests that our conventional ground forces are unable to wage a successful war campaign and their efforts are predetermined to be insignificant. But that is not necessarily true. We must accept the notion that conventional warfare plays an important role in the defense of Europe. Logic tells us that the time it takes to successfully prosecute a conventional war increases also the decision timeframe for nuclear response. As General Rogers points out:

At a minimum we require sufficient conventional forces to permit our political authorities to make a determined and deliberate decision to move to a nuclear response, if that is necessary is not enough, therefore, for us to deter an actual attack, NATO must also prevent the Soviets from achieving a situation whereby using their military power as a backdrop, they can successfully intimidate and blackmail Europe into accomodating to Soviet desires" (33:3-4).

The former commander of U.S. forces in Europe steadfastly believed that conventional forces must shed their passive and sacrificial shroud for a more active and capable role.

Close scrutiny of NATO doctrine reveals a thread of offensive intent imbedded within its underlying framework. As early as 1968, NATO's Military Committee proposed the possibility

of offensive action in their report, MC 14/3, by stating that, should aggression occur against the NATO Alliance, "...military objective must be to preserve and restore the integrity and security of NATO by employing such force as is necessary within the concept of forward defense."³ Likewise, "wresting the initiative as soon as possible" (6:60) implies to most strategic observers that noncapitulation by the Allies demands an offensive effort commensurate with that goal. At the same time, a concerted offensive thrust is required if NATO's intention is to keep the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact off balance by focusing Allied efforts on their (WP) defensive weaknesses. Then, in 1978, The Supreme Headquarters of Allied Powers Forces Europe's (SHAPE) implemented their "Long Term Defence Programme," a concept envisioning that "the higher priority that nations give to conventional defence, the more they seek operational methods by which to take advantage of the attacker's over-extension and vulnerability; to seize the initiative and to pass from a passive defence to a counter-offensive" (22:17). This clearly demonstrates an offensive desire within a flexible response attitude.

In reality, a large scale invasion by NATO ground forces, even in retaliation, is not a politically accepted concept by the Allies. NATO is simply a defensive alliance. In peacetime, its standing force levels are insufficient to simultaneously defend against an attack, provide rear area security and launch a large scale offensive operation along the entire front as well. Nor is it likely that the Alliance intends to build them to an acceptable level to do so. This position is valid. A three-

pronged operation could not be undertaken in that political setting.

To the theater and corp commanders, however, the implication of offensive action is more apparent. Consequently, the most opportune level for offensive maneuvering after the onset of hostilities is during the application of military strategy at the operational and tactical sublevels. The U.S. Army concept of operations in Central Europe, as noted in FM 100-5, Operations, envisions Airland Battle encompassing counter-attacks, exploitation and offensive operations at the earliest possible opportunity. Likewise, NATO's initiative in their FOFA operations develops "the capability to do both deep surveillance and deep strike in support of Airland Battle and interdiction. These programs are the key to the Follow-on-Forces Attack concept" (15:27). Even The Soviet Union views Airland Battle and FOFA operations "... as a reflection of NATO's determination to employ technologically advanced forces in offensive maneuvers and deep strikes to wrest the initiative away from the Warsaw Pact and "carry the war into Pac territory" (38:64).

The audacity to suggest that The North Atlantic Treaty is impregnated with offensive desires should be challenged by the demand to identify exactly where offensive action is important and under what circumstances would NATO feel compelled to attack the Warsaw Pact? What possible advantages does an offensive NATO action have for the welfare of Western Europe? Andreas von Bulow, head of West Germany's Social Democratic Party's Commission on Security Policy in the Bundestag, sees deep strikes and advanced

technology as hazardous to the balance and equilibrium of military power across the political boundary. His suggestion that "we will make progress towards relaxing tensions when the East does not feel threatened" (41:21) implies that NATO offensive intentions will not make the Warsaw Pact feel comfortable. This reflection of an element of European attitude against a NATO offensive strategy suggests that NATO leadership is content not to win the next war nor destroy European-based Soviet forces and further suggests that restoring the status quo ante bellum is the more realistic objective.

But, in my opinion, four factors suggest otherwise. First, dynamically changing political undercurrents have begun to favor a NATO defense policy that involves offensive action at the outset of hostilities. For example, the recent INF Agreement signed by President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev in December 1987 that, when ratified, reduces the intermediate nuclear capability may force a redirection of the deterrence efforts towards establishing a larger, more capable conventional force in Europe as an augmentation to the nuclear retaliation theory. Moreover, an aggressive, more robust conventional force can expand the time available for NATO's Command Authority to react. If "deliberate escalation" demands sufficient time to select the proper course of action, then the ability of our conventional forces-in-being to sustain and successfully "deter⁴ and counter a non-nuclear attack" generates more time for the political authorities to decide on nuclear escalation and/or mobilization of reserve assets. In this high risk situation, strategic offensive action can pay rich rewards in terms of time.

Second, inherent in NATO doctrine is the deep-seeded desire of the membership to regain lost territory and reestablish political boundaries. When asked the question about a "conventional retaliatory offensive" in NATO's plans, General Rogers replied, "Indeed, NATO has always been firmly committed to offensive counter-attacks operations in order to recover any NATO territory occupied by an aggressor; our operational plans reflect this commitment." (31:4) He perceived this mission as a counter action to Soviet conventional aggression with sufficient action across the Inner German Border to achieve that objective.

Third, a completely defensive stance by the Allies in the face of possible total capitulation by NATO places the Soviet Union in a favorable no-risk situation. The Soviet's strategic objective is to occupy and control all of Europe, but an offensive attack, by their own admission, is not worth the risk unless NATO's strategic nuclear and conventional capabilities are eliminated first. (28:27) Except for combat losses, they risk nothing in a conventional exchange; their military and political dominance of Eastern Europe is not threatened. But, during an interview concerning the INF negotiations, General Rogers expressed that "the Soviets must understand that the consequences of aggression by her are not going to be borne by the victims of aggression; she is going to suffer, too". (6:21) Moreover, because it is a U.S. national interest to allow all nations the opportunity to establish a free and democratic government, the elimination of communist influence in any European country establishes an atmosphere in which sovereign countries can select

nationalistic ideals and goals. So, if the United States and her allies were forced into a major conflict against the Soviet Union in Europe, the opportunity blossoms to achieve those goals by deliberately targeting and destroying Soviet forces in non-Soviet Warsaw Pact countries. The intent, of course, is to apply risk leverage to the Soviet's continental political influence in the event of war. The Soviets need to believe that they will suffer in a conventional conflict as well as a nuclear exchange. By accepting this targeting policy, I don't believe the Allies will be exposed to additional risk nor does it provoke the Soviet Union into escalating to a major conflict. It is a matter of prioritizing targets in accordance with resources and desired achievements by the Allied effort.

Last, while the use of less sophisticated forms of hostility is remote, limited, small-scale aggression is always a possibility. How should NATO and national authorities react, for instance, to a Soviet invasion of 'neutral' Austria or Sweden, or to a border dispute along the Inner German Border, or an attempt to squeeze the 'free' life out of West Berlin. Clearly, a nuclear response is an over reaction to small-scale hostilities, clearly a situation that holds nuclear retaliation at bay. Hence, when military intervention is deemed necessary by the Allied leadership, a conventional reaction, offensive in nature, is the most probable. It is even possible, as I can speculate, that NATO's response to a limited conventional thrust by an aggressor could be indirect, such as intertheater action on another front or a maritime conflict, or any other response that would counter the aggression as necessary. But, for whatever the situation, it

is more conceivable that NATO would be forced to use an offensively oriented conventional force.

So, contrary to public expression, offensive maneuver was implanted in NATO's origin. And within the last 10 years, changing attitudes on conventional force employment in Europe have developed a more overt offensively-oriented scheme of maneuver without disturbing the deterrence value of the triad. As Secretary of Defense, Frank Carlucci, detailed in the Defense Department's Competitive Strategy Initiatives for FY89: "Finally, to exploit Soviet aversions to a multitheater, protracted conflict, the task force recommended developing an offensive warfighting capability for conducting large-scale joint and combined conventional offensive military campaigns." (B:117). What remains to be done now is to assess the reality for an offense in the Central Europe scenario and secondly, attempt to visualize NATO's capacity to prosecute an offensive mission.

CHAPTER IV

THEATER OFFENSIVE APPLICATION

A defensive campaign can be fought with offensive battles, and in a defensive battle, we can employ our divisions offensively.

Carl von Clausewitz

The problem that has confronted the operational commanders for years is how to achieve the necessary degree of flexibility on the battlefield, under the political guidance given, that enables the Allies to take the initiative as soon as possible. General Sir Nigel Bagnell, Commander, Northern Army Group, Allied Command Europe, emphatically addressed that question in 1984 when he said:

And let us be quite clear there is no alternative to us attempting to seize the initiative at an early stage. Unless we achieve this we will only be reacting to the Soviet moves and, as a greatly numerically inferior force, would inevitably be ground down in a battle of attrition which we could never hope to win (4:60).

So, as hostilities in Europe signal an end to deterrence, Allied efforts should be immediately focused on achieving the theater objectives. To win a conventional battle in Europe, NATO battlefield commanders are forced to employ a two-edged strategy; defend, and attack as far forward as possible. The critical action of the strategy is the parallel efforts of the defensive struggle and the offensive thrust, a point that concerns military and political leaders alike. But separate actions can be carried on simultaneously and independently at various operational and tactical levels. The theater commander must be able to control the size, the composition, location and the timing of Warsaw Pact

forces entering the main battle area. To control those four characteristics, NATO forces will be forced to initiate offensive battle as is necessary throughout their area of interest. To battalion and division commanders, battlefield tactics, including the attack, will control the battlefield. To the theater and corp commanders, Warsaw Pact forces will be targeted and attacked as much as 300 Km from the main battlefield, primarily by airpower.

Thus, it is quite apparent that operational commanders must begin to concentrate effective combat power to thwart the initial Warsaw Pact attack on the Allied defense, and initiate, as early as possible, action that will control the timing sequence of combat force arriving on both sides of the battle area. Because control of arriving Soviet forces becomes absolutely essential for early success, both the deep and close battles require aggressive Allied action. The Airland Battle Doctrine, developed by the U.S. Army, and NATO's Follow-on-Forces-Attack (FDFA) concept, are the most striking examples of the Allies' great reliance on offensive maneuver in the theater battle.

The success of the combat strategy for NATO forces in Central Europe hinges on concisely defined, and appropriate, military objectives that are extracted from political guidance. As a strategist, the theater commander must focus his efforts on the destruction of Soviet military power, for that should be the center of effort for the entire military campaign. Since the Soviet's immediate risk in initiating war in Central Europe is their loss of political influence - gained through military blackmail - of other members of the Warsaw Pact, the most

logical objective of operational commanders is to remove Soviet forces from the geopolitical centers in Central Europe. That effort logically culminates in removing Soviet political influence in Europe. To do so, NATO forces must undertake whatever achievable offensive action they can muster to achieve those goals.

However, thrusting NATO forces into the attack in Central Europe depends largely on the correct use of the terrain and management of the adversary's order of battle through control of his location and time of entry into battle.

The evolution of the modern military force, when coupled with a dynamically applied doctrine, displays a battlefield unlike those of World War II. NATO's application of her "Forward Defense" strategy makes Western Europe's terrain difficult to defend. In contrast to the European campaign in World War II where a series of battles were fought across Western Europe, the theater battlefield in the next major conventional war in Central Europe will be almost 1,000 Km wide and 1,000 Km long, encompassing every European country and almost assuring their involvement in the conflict. At the onset of fighting, eight NATO national military combat corps are deployed along the 850 Km Inner German Border, each with their own territorial responsibility and all of them deployed as far forward as possible. The corps commanders' areas of interest stretch east 300 Kilometers across the Inner German Border and envelope all of East Germany and Czechoslovakia and a portion of Hungary. Like an umbrella, the theater commander's interest cascades eastward

beyond Poland and across the Soviet border. Moreover, in time of war, the rear battle area may extend into French sovereignty. Because the lack of defensive depth during peacetime precludes trading space for time, strategic and operational commanders are forced to expand their battlefield depth eastward thus forcing an increased reliance by the Allies on long range target acquisition and strike capabilities and accurate predictions of Warsaw Pact avenues of attack.

I am fairly optimistic that battlefield commands can defeat an advancing adversary three to four times their size in relative combat power, if that is all that they are confronted with at any one time. This entails denying the Warsaw Pact the ability to concentrate fire power at the place of its choosing by preventing reinforcing units and DMG from maneuvering to advantageous positions that could adversely influence the battle. Through the eyes at each command level in NATO, the movement of succeeding echelon must either be stopped or their combat power drastically reduced before they are able to deploy. As an example of controlling the composition of units, "Artillery should be the first priority of destruction at the initiation of a meeting engagement" (4:8). To the tactical ground commander, that means priority of targeting to counter battery fire, for example, while the theater commander must attack with surface-to-surface missiles and air force interdiction assets. In the defensive sector of the battlefield, tactical commanders are prepared to maneuver to gain the initiative as soon as possible. The Soviets are the most vulnerable during their penetration phase, so disrupting the tempo and arrival sequence at that time is most

important to the tactical commander. As Colonel Thomas White advocated in November 1987, "the actions of NATO forces to inhibit Soviet offensive tempo and timeliness should be focused on enemy forces in proximity to the close battle. It is here that time is the most important, and the outcome of subsequent battles will be largely decided" (46:6).

The Soviet Union is the principle threat to the Alliance in Western Europe. Its large European military theaters (TVD's) display substantial mechanized and armor military bases that are augmented by a sound tactical air force and a large readily mobilized reserve force. In the last decade, the Soviet armed forces capacity and density have considerably improved and continue to grow. At first glance, it seems NATO would be outclassed in weapons and manpower in a Central Europe defensive struggle, much less conducting any worthwhile offensive action. But a microanalysis of a variety of battlefield variables paints a picture that may be more promising than first believed and begins to put more emphasis on the capability to correctly prosecute the war.

An important point to consider is combat power ratios. Realistic combat power ratios depend upon the proper selection of data from a seemingly infinite array of sources, including defense intelligence departments. At times, a lack of detailed knowledge of Soviet military force capabilities and posture seems to cloud the true assessment of Soviet military power that can be brought to bear against Allied forces in Europe. However, Western intelligence sources believe that 190 Warsaw Pact combat

divisions are capable of sustained combat in Europe (33:13). That report is continually under attack by proponents for the dissolution of NATO who, in turn, are accused of diluting the capability of Warsaw Pact forces by attempting to derate Soviet peacetime sustained strength levels, training levels. There is also another faction of NATO supporter's who believe the data does not adequately account for rear area vulnerabilities, lack of Alliance cohesion and reliability or the Soviet's interest with NATO's other flanks.¹⁰

What is important here, though, is accurately predicting the Pact's front line combat posture - combat divisions and air forces- at any one time in the framework of the battle. This naturally infers that NATO's capability to control the arrival time of Warsaw Pact ground and air forces into any portion of the battlefield (deep, main or rear), not the total combat force correlation, dictates the ratios that are conducive for successful NATO offensive operations. This is the foundation for the ground and air battle; control the timing and enemy density of the battle.

While the correlation of relative strengths and capabilities of "comparable type units" is clouded by dissimilarities in unit structure and size, the overall combat capacities of both sides seems to remain about equal. Generally today, in Central Europe, "rough parity exists in conventional arms" between NATO and Warsaw Pact forces (14:48), a situation that may compel the Soviets to assume a defensive posture just as NATO does now. However, in a preemptive attack by the Soviets, about 78 Warsaw Pact divisions could be massed initially against 94 larger NATO

divisions. A well balanced NATO force, heavily armed with antitank armament would be pitted against an extremely dense Warsaw Pact armor oriented force. Moreover, just as the Soviets consider air operations as the most important element of the Pact's integrated fire destruction plan at the TSMA level (theater level, such as the western front in Europe), the ultimate success of the Allies' need for air supremacy and interdiction rests upon the ability to eliminate, or at least neutralize, the Warsaw Pact's offensive air capabilities. Even the slight qualitative advantage in NATO fighter-bombers and attack aircraft is neutralized by the Pact's superior number of interceptor fighters. The intelligence community estimates the Warsaw Pact owns more than 8,000 aircraft. Depending upon the source of information, 4,400 are ground attack aircraft and medium range bombers while about 2,700 are reserved for the defense of the Soviet homeland and are not available for offensive strikes. As a result, the ability to consolidate combat aircraft forward into Central Europe is a matter of speculation. But at least parity of air assets in Central Europe should effectively hinder the Soviet's reliance on the air force to destroy NATO conventional and nuclear resources as a precondition to attacking NATO ground forces. As Dr. Phillip Petersen, Assistant for Europe and the Soviet Union on the Policy Staff of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, contends:

So long NATO maintains a survivable nuclear retaliatory capability, the Soviets have no intention of initiating nuclear use. Such an attack does not preclude, however, a Soviet attempt to conduct a preemptive nuclear attack if convinced of an imminent NATO nuclear strike. The Soviets are convinced, however, that if they could take NATO past

the optimum moment for the deployment of nuclear weapons quickly enough, then subsequently, it will be all the more difficult to use nuclear weapons with the necessary effect (28:27).5

As a last thought, the strength of the allegiance of Eastern European countries to Russia during a Soviet-initiated attack is a frequently addressed variable. Not all Pact members are comfortable existing under the suffocating Russian political and military influence, and as a result, may not have a firm affinity to the Soviets. As Bulow suggests, "in view of the experience of the last war, there is not the slightest inclination among the communist nations of Eastern Europe to enter into armed conflict. What could possibly induce a Pole, for example, to support actively a war for the Soviet Union?" (41:123). That intangible possibility, coupled with the speculative derating of the performance of the Soviet fighting force, may impact the correlation of force ratios in terms that are more favorable at strategic points along NATO's front.

As previously suggested, the best comparison of opposing forces in Europe's next war correlates the quality and quantity of combat units over the entire spectrum of wartime. Battlefield superiority, like air superiority, is a matter of enjoying a perponderance of assets at any one point and moment in the battle. But as William Kaufmann states, "One of the most important reasons why NATO always does so poorly in the more pessimistics assessments has to do with assumed speed and size of the Pact attack." (23:11). Like NATO, the Soviet Union does not maintain a standing force in Europe capable of a massive attack on the Alliance. Rapid and substantial reinforcement of standing

combat assets is necessary. Moreover, the inborn fear of a NATO attack on their homeland drives the Russians to prepare and implement defense plans against a preemptive strike, thus they are not poised to strike in Central Europe with sufficient force to be successful. It is more likely that the Warsaw Pact's timetable requirements for mobilization, which greatly affects relative combat power assessments, is sufficiently long enough to allow the Allies reasonable time to prepare for a confrontation. NATO will not unknowingly one day be confronted with 190 combat ready divisions. Even the most pessimistic analysts believe that it would take at least 4 days for the Warsaw Pact to mobilize 30 combat ready divisions.^B Elements in the NATO intelligence community doubt whether the Warsaw Pact can mobilize such potent forces in time to overwhelm NATO forces with superior firepower, thus, skepticism grows about the Warsaw Pact's ability to mass overwhelming numbers of tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, artillery and aircraft to launch a successful attack. (23:10-17)

Regardless of acceptable force correlations, other initiatives have excellent potential for influencing the battle. It is quite possible that various NATO forces along portions of the Forward Edge of the Battle Area (FEBA) will not be confronted with a numerically superior adversary, thus opening the door for Allied counterattacks along the front. For instance, the actual axis of the Warsaw Pact attacks along the front can be predicted more accurately by deliberately channelling the attacking forces at a predetermined position. The Soviets hope to attain a superior numerical edge by attacking the weakest Allied position. As the Soviets have proclaimed, "The terrain associated with

various strategic regions and forces defending them determines the placement or location of operational directives..." (28:27) They most probably hope to achieve this, for example, by attacking NATO's northern flank and avoid direct confrontation with American and German forces in the south (28:28). NATO may not be able to hold everywhere along the line, but, in the least, battle captains can at least demonstratively build unfordable defenses that preclude the Soviets use of that terrain. We then can predict where they have to attack for a successful breakthrough. That means that careful selection of vital ground and the allocation of necessary resources for its defense, such as standoff precision guided missiles, are absolutely essential. By preparing against those areas with built-in fortresses and barrier plans, Allied avenues of attack and air corridors may unfold and allow combat units, such as in the Central Army Group (CENTAG) and the 2d Allied Tactical Air Force, (2ATAF) another offensive opportunity in the theater battle.

Successful management of the variables on the battlefield will eventually win the theater campaign for the Coalition. But, in the final analysis, the success of NATO's defensive efforts will depend on the Allies' political will and resolve to win the next war. The optimum sequence of events for a conventional war in Europe depends upon seizing any initiative available and attacking to control the timing. To be sure, the outcome of the battle rests on the Alliance's ability to neutralize the opposing forces capability to attack. Soviet indirect fire support must be attacked and neutralized, Follow-on-forces must be stopped

before they reach the main battle area, air defense systems must be neutralized before air interdiction missions can be undertaken, offensive air force and missiles- the heart of the Soviet's integrated fire destruction plan- must be destroyed before they can be used, and so on. Modern military experiences in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam have taught us that a war is never won in a purely defensive stance, with our heels dug in. The European war would be no exception. Success on the battlefield will depend on forward leaning troops; the only way to win is to attack. Without a doubt, there is no recourse to a military commander but to win the war.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Audacious, Audacious, Always Audacious!
General George C. Patton

Ironically, the defense of Europe in a non nuclear conflict rests upon the initiative and aggressiveness of NATO's campaign managers. A successful defense certainly enables the civil authorities to constrain the use of nuclear force to defend Europe. But unleashing conventional forces in Central Europe while restraining nuclear forces at the same time uncovers a battlefield that is much more dynamic than first believed. Contrary to past battles in Europe, the next conventional battle will consume the entire European continent simultaneously, all the way from France to the edge of the Soviet Union, and the most critical element of the campaign is the proper and timely deployment of the air and land forces.

Several conclusions can be made about modern warfare in Europe. First, the "Flexible Response" strategy employed by NATO in Europe today continues to be successful. Since its conception, the deterrence leg of the triad has prevented a conventional or nuclear war from being fought in Europe. The Soviets have no desire to conduct a nuclear war if the Alliance maintains the capability for nuclear retaliation. Statesmen and military personnel should endeavor to continue and support the strategy to its fullest extent.

Second, if hostilities do erupt in Central Europe, it is quite possible that it will be initially fought in a conventional mode, free from nuclear use. As stated earlier, The Soviet Union

has benignly expressed confidence in winning a conventional war only if the threat of NATO nuclear use can be eliminated from the battlefield and the continent (28:27). Moreover, the size and capability of the opposing conventional forces will dictate the time for national authorities to decide upon the need to escalate to nuclear use.

Third, the desire and need for offensive action in non-nuclear conventional war is imbedded in all layers of action, from the NATO headquarters to the theater and tactical commanders. An offensive thread has been woven into its very underlying policy. Although NATO is a defensive alliance, the successful defense of Europe may well be decided by the proper employment of offensive action. Moreover, to achieve the entire array of political goals, NATO forces must employ an offensive effort, such as NATO's Follow-on-Forces Attack and the U.S. Army's Airland Battle doctrine, that controls the size and composition of the Soviet Forces and their tempo. As a critical function of battlefield management, this is only accomplished by aggressive use of offensive action in all arenas of the battlefield.

Fourth, the success of Allied combat efforts hang in balance on the proper application of airpower. While not a subject of indepth examination in this paper, it is quite evident that the success of airpower, on either side, is the pivotal point in the war. By itself, airpower will not win the war, but the misapplication of it, again by either side, will most assuredly be catastrophic. All types of missions - counter air, interdiction, close air support, strategic airlift - must be

applied in the most timely and proper sequence. If the campaign is to be successful, airpower must be applied by NATO first in order to preempt Warsaw Pact strikes and furthermore, preemptive strikes must have priority over retaliatory missions.

Last, while theater commanders can define their battlefield objectives in a concrete manner, not all the political goals are as well defined. Deterrence in itself, of course, is a continuing goal. But in a conventional outbreak in Europe, the geopolitical borders become obscured and the ultimate objectives of ground and air forces need to be defined more clearly. That may well entail attacking, if possible, the political centers in Eastern Europe, a policy designed to place more Soviet Union's valuables at risk in a conventional confrontation.

For whatever discontent there is about an aggressive NATO alliance, the option of using offensive action in defense of Europe is becoming a real event. Military history has taught us a valuable lesson; a nation or alliance cannot win a war to their satisfaction by defending only. Perhaps NATO leadership subscribes to this more than we know. Certainly military commanders recognize the need for aggressiveness and initiative. Otherwise, NATO would not be as prepared, as it is now, to attack and counterattack in its defense.

NOTES

1. This initiative, known as MC 14/3, was the last of three recommendations by NATO's Military Committee (MC) in 1967 in response to the concern of the massive retaliation concept to be an adequate deterrence. It remains unchanged today.
2. General Rogers, SACEUR from 1979 to 1987, was responding to inquiries from both the Senate Armed Services Committee and the House Appropriations Committee as to the status of NATO's defense posture at the time.
3. MC14/3 is currently a NATO classified document, SECRET. The above statement has no classification when extracted from the document.
4. Paraphrased from MC 14/3.
5. The underlining was added by the author to earmark an imbedded Soviet quotation used by Dr. Petersen in his article.
6. W. Kaufman is a consultant with the Brookings Foreign Policy Studies program. Mr. Kaufman has presented lectures in Europe on the role of conventional forces role and European security. His article, "Who is Conning the Alliance", was used as food-for-thought for this article.
7. NATO must be capable of identifying the moment of decision by the WP to mobilize for invasion in order to have 4 days response time.
8. MC 14/3 evaluation.
9. General Sir Bagnell made his remarks in 1984 as Commander, NORTAG.
10. The proponents for both sides of the argument are far too

numerous to list here. There are, however a representative array of articles listed in the bibliography for the interested reader's use.

APPENDIX A
NATO MILITARY STRATEGY

An excerpt from a statement by
General Bernard W. Rogers, The Commander-in-Chief
U.S. European Command
before the Senate Armed Services Committee 25 March 1987. (36:3-4)

NATO and U.S. military strategies are fully compatible. Both recognize that deterrence and defense must be accomplished collectively, as an alliance, in order to be successful. The primary goal of NATO strategy is to deter the threat of any kind of war, not just nuclear war. And it is to achieve this end that NATO's strategy has evolved in response to changing threats confronting NATO.

The strategy of Flexible Response/Forward Defense was adopted in 1967 in response to changes in the strategic nuclear balance which weakened the credibility of NATO's previous strategy of "massive retaliation". Flexible response seeks to deter any possible aggression, ranging from subversion to all-out nuclear war. It does so by causing potential aggressors to believe that the costs of aggression would far exceed any possible benefits.

For a deterrent strategy to be effective, it must be credible. To maintain credibility, NATO must demonstrate both the capability and the will to prevent an aggressor from achieving its objectives. Flexible Response remains credible by maintaining a full range of options to counter military aggression. Should deterrence fail, the strategy envisions the

use of the following responses to restore the territorial integrity and security of NATO.

(1) Direct Defense to defeat an attack or to place the burden of escalation on the aggressor. This is NATO's preferred response. It deters attack by being able to deny the aggressor his initial objectives and depends for its success on the maintenance of adequate conventional forces. Effective conventional defense strengthens the credibility of deterrence since the threat of nuclear response to limited conventional aggression are of questionable credibility in an area of nuclear parity.

(2) Deliberate Escalation on NATO's part, to include the possible first-use of nuclear weapons. The first-use option is the crucial factor in our equation of deterrence and its being credible.

(3) General Nuclear Response. The ultimate guarantor of deterrence.

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